

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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44

ACTION EUR-12

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R 261520Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5478

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 3229

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SP

SUBJECT: LINGERING DOUBTS ABOUT ARIAS' SPEECH

1. WHEN I TOOK BRIAN ATWOOD OF SENATOR EAGLETON'S STAFF TO CALL ON FRAGA MORNING APRIL 24, FRAGA RECEIVED A TELEPHONE CALL FROM THE KING AND THEY SPOKE BRIEFLY ABOUT ARIAS' SPEECH. FRAGA INFORMED THE KING THAT AT THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING APRIL 23, ARIAS HAD ONLY GIVEN THE MINISTERS A VERY GENERAL OUTLINE ABOUT HIS SPEECH NOW SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 28, AND THAT HE (FRAGA) CONTINUED TO BE SOMEWHAT PREOCCUPIED. AT WHAT ARIAS MIGHT EVENTUALLY SAY. IN LATER CONVERSATION WITH ATWOOD AND MYSELF, FRAGA ENDEAVORED TO PLAY DOWN THE IMPORTANCE OF ARIAS' SPEECH AS, ACCORDING TO HIM, THE IMPORTANT THING WAS WHAT THE GOVERNMENT DID IN CARRYING OUT ITS REFORM PROGRAM WHICH IS STILL ON COURSE, AND NOT WHAT WAS SAID. HOWEVER, HE DID ADMIT TO ME THAT AN AMBIGUOUS SPEECH WOULD HAVE A NEGATIVE PUBLIC IMPACT BOTH HERE AND ABROAD.

2. AS LATE AS YESTERDAY AFTERNOON, THE KING (WITH WHOM I HAD LUNCH WITH MUTUAL FRIENDS) HAD STILL NOT RECEIVED A DRAFT OF ARIAS' SPEECH AND REMAINED CONCERNED ABOUT THE DIRECTION IT WOULD TAKE.

STABLER

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